

Anna Comnena's account of the First Crusade

History and politics in the reigns of the emperors Alexius I and Manuel I Comnenus

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Anna Comnena's history the *Alexiad* has been accorded a high honorary status by Byzantine historians. Her pioneering efforts in philosophy and the thoroughness of her historical methodology are admired, although there is a distinct reluctance to analyse her historical writing. On a superficial level the *Alexiad* is a straightforward text: an historical panegyric in its organisation, frequently eulogistic in tone, in the manner of court orations, and rhetorically strongly influenced by conventional Byzantine pastiches of Homer. A triumphal mood pervades the biography. A somewhat more careful assessment soon reveals the significant tensions and contradictions which lurk beneath the formalised strength of this epic historical narrative. Ideological and cultural problematics abound. The self-conscious celebratory presentation of Byzantium's cultural elitism is frequently subverted by the author's pessimism. The spatial and temporal terrain of the *Alexiad* contains many visionary qualities, even though the text purports to narrate the events 'as they occurred'. Historical perspectives and idiosyncratic philosophical positions impinge, blend, envelop, and disorganise the text. Among the many themes is Anna's presentation of the 'Latin West', and in particular her characterisation of the appearance of crusaders in Byzantine society. A more personalised feature is Anna's self-projection of herself within the *Alexiad* as 'a dutiful daughter' and 'a loving wife'. Yet the narrative contains elements of gender confusion, for there is an assertive and possessive interest in forms of political power that were usually culturally exclusive to Byzantine men.

This ambiguous tension between her femininity and a masculine aspiration is mischievously developed by the thirteenth century Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates.¹ In an unusually erotic passage Choniates sniggers at Anna's humiliation of her slothful husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, recounting that she painfully squeezed his penis, and intensified his discomfort by her refusal to allow him to withdraw. Nicetas Choniates uses the incident to make the point that the motive for Anna's physical dominance and humiliation of her husband lay with her frustration and anger at his refusal to fulfil her powerful desire to usurp the imperial throne. This portrayal contrasts strongly with the tones of filial and matrimonial devotion which grace the *Alexiad*.

The narration of Anna's and her mother, Irene Ducas' manipulative, and somewhat histrionic efforts to persuade Alexius I Comnenus to disbar his eldest son in favour of his first born, Anna, and her husband are too well known to be discussed here.² But while Nicetas Choniates seems to have derived some amusement from Anna's passionate assertiveness, Anna in her own history bewailed the misfortunes which had finally overwhelmed her. The *Alexiad* ends in book XV in a state of deepest angst: 'after the death of both rulers, the loss of the Caesar and the grief caused by these events would have sufficed to wear me out, body and soul, but now like the rivers flowing down from the high mountains . . . the streams of adversity . . . united in one torrent to flood my house. Let this be the end of my history, then, lest, as I write of these sad events I become more embittered'. The reasons for this bitterness remain partially obscure. The purpose of this article is to highlight several pertinent themes which situate Anna's anger and misery in the wider context of

1. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. I.A. Van Dieten (Berlin 1975). There is a translation by Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Wayne State University, 1984). The particular passage which refers to Anna's sexual harassment is in Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*: I 'The Reign of John Comnenus', chapter X.

2. Anna's ability to rewrite and omit important, but controversial events is outlined in B. Leib, 'Les silences d'Anne Comnène ou ce que n'a pas dit l'*Aléxiade*', *BS* 19 (1958) 1-11. Another prominent omission in the *Alexiad* is the trial of Eustratios, bishop of Nicaea. Anna was his patron. Angold suggests that the bishop's condemnation is likely to have been a defeat for the Empress Irene and Anna in their struggle with John Comnenus, M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204* (London 1984) 151-2.

Byzantine court politics, and to explain some prominent features of her account of the First Crusade.

It is widely accepted that Anna Comnena wrote a clear methodological outline of the 'science of history'. The historian is dispassionate, 'friendship and enmities had to be forgotten'. Factual material is dependent upon research techniques; people who were familiar with the events of her father's reign were interviewed. Some of the events she herself was an eyewitness to: 'above all I have often heard the Emperor and George Palaeologus discussing these matters in my presence'. Documents were sent to her from former veterans. She then compared this material with her own writings and the notes she had made on the various stories she had herself heard. 'From all this material the whole fabric of my history — my true history — has been woven'. Anna clearly differentiates between an historical text and a court panegyric. She explains to the reader that her historical methodology protects the status of the *Alexiad* against the criticism that some parts were false, or that particular passages contained exaggerated passages of praise. In more general terms Anna wrote that she was able to undertake the history of her father's reign because she had made an earnest study of the Greek language; she was practiced in rhetoric and had thoroughly studied the treatises of Aristotle and the dialogues of Plato. Formally she remains a lover of wisdom.

The *Alexiad* also contains several deeply felt statements which relate to Anna's attitude towards time, posterity and the glory of her father's reign. These statements are not consistent with her perception of the 'science of history', for they are not written in a dispassionate manner. Instead they reveal a powerful form of pessimism and emotionalism. The first few words of the preface of the *Alexiad* reveal that 'the stream of time, irresistible, ever moving, carries off and bears away all things that come to birth and plunges them into utter darkness'. This passage is then followed by the mournful comment that mighty and worthy deeds suffer the same fate as those deed which are of no account. Rationality and the logic of progress are then evoked as Anna seeks to contain the image of dark oblivion by concluding that . . . 'the science of history is a great bulwark against this stream of time; in a way

it checks this irresistible flood, it holds in a tight grip whatever it can seize floating on the surface and will not allow it to slip away into the depths of Oblivion'. Her narrative is saturated by an irreconcilable tension between these unitary dimensions: scientificity, and the esotericism of fate.

Because Anna was the first-born child of Alexius and Irene she was granted access to the inner circle of the imperial family. Her marriage to Caesar Bryennios sustained her prominence in a social hierarchy that included the greatest Byzantine aristocratic families, the Botanites, the Bryennius, the Comneni and the Ducas. This social milieu ritualised status. Even after her political disgrace Anna still retained aspects of that earlier stature. Moreover a social prestige which was attached to her person was also transferred to her life work, the *Alexiad*.³ The narrative of this text was not merely to be read for entertainment, for interest sake; it was an instrument and expression of power; her father's power and her own frustrated imperial power. Much of the preface and other methodological passages are really involved with this issue of establishing the authority of meaning. Her very competence as a writer and historian implied the legitimacy of her interpretation; it also implies the power to impose that reception on her readership. This process worked in both ways. If the narration of Alexius's reign was believed and understood, if the principles which determined his course of actions as emperor were agreed with, then Anna's own attitude to important political affairs would be respected, honoured, and could become influential. History could speak retrospectively, and its meanings could be authoritative. The *Alexiad* is a homage to Alexius. It is also Alexius's political testament as recorded by his first born, the porphyronogenitus. And it is an outline of the form of procedures and policies which Anna believed to be ethically ideal. Alexius and his supporters were thus situated in a tissue of tales which recapitulated the past, while commenting upon the present.

3. *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, translated by E.R.A. Sewter (London 1969). The best edition is *Anne Comnène, Aléxiade*, ed. B. Leib, 3 vols (Paris 1937-45, repr. 1967).

Assuming that the text was circulated in the 1150s the themes of the *Alexiad* would inevitably reproduce a comparison with the policies of the current Byzantine Emperor, Manuel I Comnenus.⁴ Anna's history is a treatise in oppositional politics. It might even be said that the *Alexiad* reveals in a coded manner the policies Anna herself would have wished to have carried out if she had become empress. It is in this context that her account of the First Crusade can be considered.

In general terms Anna presents the Latins and Franks with all the classical features of a barbarian hoard: these peoples are incredibly numerous, they squabble and quarrel, they lie and betray each other, they become excessively ambitious, while they have no insight into the paucity of their absurd aspirations, and of course, they are excessively violent and greedy. Latins in Anna's narrative never show any remorse or compassion; they are usually arrogant, silly and totally craven whenever money matters are mentioned. Her narrative of the First Crusade is at times merely an interlude in the broader and more emphatic struggle between her father and the South Italian Normans, Robert Guiscard and his son, Bohemund. This residualist presentation of the essential traits of a barbarous people is accompanied by a sequence of episodic incidents, each of which contains a moralism.

Anna accords to Peter the Hermit the responsibility for initiating the crusader pilgrimage.⁵ His contribution was an

4. This point is also mentioned by Kazhdan — 'The same could be said of the "Alexias" by Anna Comnena whose aim was not only to glorify her father but also to criticize, in a more or less disguised way, the reigning Emperor Manuel I' (A.P. Kazhdan, G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* [Washington D.C. 1982]). Kazhdan refers to the work of Lyubarskij on Anna Comnena: J.A.N. Lyubarskij, 'Mirovozereniye Anny Komniny', *Učeniye Zapiski Velikolukskogo Pedagogičeskogo Instituta* 24 (1964); J.A.N. Lyubarskij, *Anna Komnina Aleksiada* (Moscow 1965).

5. For Peter the Hermit see E.O. Blake and C. Morris, 'A Hermit Goes to War: Peter and the Origins of the First Crusade', in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition* (= *Studies in Church History* 22, 1984) 79-107; P. Alphandry, A. Dupont, 'La Croisade populaire de Pierre l'Ermite', in *La Chrétienté et l'idée de Croisades: les premières croisades* (Paris 1954) 57-79. Albert of Aix begins his account in Jerusalem at the Holy Sepulchre, where Peter the Hermit has a dream-vision in which Christ urges him to rouse the faithful for the purpose of cleansing the Holy Places, Albertus Aquensis, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux* IV (Paris 1879) 272.

important intervention, as has been recently recognised. The more interesting and distinctive feature of her account is not the characterisation of Peter's motives, but the absence of any mention of Pope Urban II's preaching of the crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1096. It is quite inconceivable that the Pope would not have informed Alexius of the proposed arrival of thousands of armed pilgrims in Byzantine territory. Since Urban had suggested a departure date in his letters to various potential crusaders, he would have obviously thought of their passage through Byzantine territory and their convergence at Constantinople.⁶ Besides the Emperor Alexius had sent envoys to the earlier Council of Piacenza, March 1095, to appeal to the Pope to succour Byzantium's need for military aid against the Turks.⁷ While Urban's crusader oration at Clermont almost certainly mentioned Jerusalem, and invoked the pilgrimage theme, his speech also emphasized the need to give help to the eastern churches.⁸ Although the Peasants' Crusade was premature Alexius's administration proved well able to cope with the passage of the varied armies. Moreover, the emperor's considered tactics of persuasion, cajoling, and inducement appear to be so self-assured that they surely indicate considerable pre-planning. If the oath of fealty had already been used with regard to various South Italian Norman exiles in the emperor's service, it was quite a different matter to use such a practice with the much more powerful barons

6. Pope Urban's Letters number II and III in Heinrich Hagenmayer, ed., *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100: Epistulae et Chartae* (Innsbruck 1901) 140-1, 152-3.

7. D.C. Munro, 'Did the Emperor Alexius Ask for Aid at the Council of Piacenza?', *American Historical Review* 27 (1922).

8. H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade', *History* 55 (1970) 177-188; J. Riley-Smith, 'Crusading As An Act of Love', *History* 65 (1980) 177-192; *idem*, 'Pope Urban's Message', (chapter 1) in *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London 1986); E.O. Blake, 'The Formation of the Crusade Idea', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970) 11-31; H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'The Gregorian Papacy, Byzantium, and the First Crusade', in *Byzantium and the West c.850-c.1200*, ed. J.D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam 1988) 145-169.

and princes who were undertaking the crusade.⁹ Alexius must therefore have assumed that they would be co-operative, which they generally were. A loose concept of christian fraternity was used to resolve any disagreeable tension.¹⁰ Alexius was always careful to see that the princes were lavishly rewarded with gifts, including clothing, gold and silver monies, and horses after they had taken the oath. It would also appear that Alexius adopted Godfrey of Lorraine and Stephen of Blois as his sons, in the old Romano-Byzantino imperial style. Stephen also mentions in his letter to his wife Adele that Alexius repeatedly asked that they commend one of their sons to the Byzantine emperor so that he could be brought up at the imperial court with honour and accord. None of this appears in Anna's account of the crusade. Peter appears partly to explain the origins of the crusading movement; he is a literary decoy which diverts attention away from that more obstinate and controversial matter: the Byzantine Emperor's

9. F.L. Ganshof, 'Recherches sur le lien juridique qui unissait les chefs de la Première Croisade à l'empereur byzantin', in *Mélanges offerts à P.E. Martin* (Geneva 1961) 49-63. Note the comments of Le Goff on the ritual of vassalage: 'Thus the first act, the first structure of the system creates an unequal relationship between lord and vassals. . . the second act of faith noticeably alters things . . . the essential point is that the texts stress mainly the conjuncture of attitude and equality in the physical gesture. . . Finally investiture is clearly related to the practice of the gift-counter gift. After the inequality-equality phase the system is completed with a genuinely mutual bond, a reciprocal contract. . . Finally, it should be noted that if homage, the oath, and investiture of the fief constitute a single complete system, the significations of the successive symbolic rites do not destroy but rather complement one another.' J. Le Goff, 'The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage', *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago-London 1980) 237-287.

The first princes' letter written from Antioch states that 'The Emperor in the middle of May pledged his faith and security on oath, giving likewise hostages, namely his nephew, and his son-in-law. In addition to this he added that he would not further attempt to molest any pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre. He also sent his protopatron with orders throughout the Empire even to Durazzo threatening the death penalty through hanging for those who attacked pilgrims'. Letter XII, in Hagenmayer *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, 153-5. Albert of Aix records that Alexius's heir, John, was pledged as a hostage in his negotiations with Count Godfrey: Albertus Aquensis, *Historia Hiersolymitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux*, IV (Paris 1879) II.

10. W.M. Daly, 'Christian Fraternity, the Crusades and the Security of Constantinople, 1097-1204', *Medieval Studies* 22 (1960) 43-89.

relationship with the Papacy. Anna is silent on Pope Urban II, whereas she was violently abusive towards the earlier Pope, Gregory VII. She does, however, allude to the desire of pilgrims to worship at 'Our Lord's tomb', but religious sentiments apparently are merely the motives of the 'simple folk'.¹¹

In her account of these 'simple folk', the Peasants' Crusade, Anna presents the evidence in such a way as to allow the reader to deduce the obvious justice which emerges in the savagery of the event. The crusaders clearly bring on their troubles.¹² These barbarians more especially the Normans, who roast babies on spits and then eat them, destroyed themselves in the pursuit of loot, booty and wealth. The Turks have only to realise the obvious; that the racial weakness of the Celts, Normans and Latins is the means to destroy them. Despite the hideous slaughter Peter the hermit isn't contrite. In fact he denounces his fellow pilgrims as robbers and sinners. Thus Anna presents the man who initiated the whole venture disowning his people because they deserved their fate.¹³ Like all Latins he is said to be supremely arrogant. The crusade saga is reduced to a point of absurdity, almost before its begun.

Anna then moves on to explain Hugh Vermandois's arrival in Byzantium.¹⁴ Although he was the brother of the king of France she makes him appear foolish because he is so ridiculously proud: 'know Emperor that I am king of kings, the greatest beneath the heavens'. She describes in a straight-forward manner the passage of his troops through Italy, but a natural storm wrecks his vessel and Hugh is spewed up by the sea on the coast in a tiny skiff. Stripped of his wealth and resources Hugh is now both penniless and humiliated, but help is at hand, for he is raised up by the emperor's beneficence. Anna has involved 'nature' in order to chastise a prince who is caricatured. Hugh exists only as an expression of Latin arrogance.

The next episode features a minor political figure who becomes

11. E.R. Sewter *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, X 308-313.

12. *Alexiad*, X 310-1.

13. *Alexiad*, X 313.

14. *Alexiad*, X 313-15.

the vehicle for Anna to construct a powerful ideological diatribe. This is the episode which she ascribes to the voyage of Prebentzas, but its really a fellow voyager who is the main focus of the narrative — 'a certain latin priest'.¹⁵ Anna's presentation of this man is intended to horrify her readers. The priest fires a diabolical cross-bow several times at the local hero, Marianus. After wielding this ferocious weapon Anna describes how the priest was hit again and again. Covered in his own blood the man is an embattled animal who refuses to acknowledge the armistice. He fights on throwing stones and then barley cakes at Marianus. Anna makes an analogy to suggest that these cakes might have been used at the celebration of the Latin mass. Finally defeated the priest finds Marianus on landfall, and while boasting of his invincibility in fighting on the land, gives Marianus a large cup, which appears to be rather like a chalice. He then dies. The idealism and spirituality of the Latin clerics on the crusade is cruelly caricatured by Anna, while she implicitly praises the traditions of the orthodox faith for generally not allowing the clergy to go to war. Anna has largely embellished, even invented this episode in order to strike a rhetorical blow at the papal interest in the eastern churches. Fellow christians they might have been, but for Anna Marianus remains a Greek hero, and the priest, only a barbarian, a wild animal, a deranged figure whose racial features overdetermine his christian faith.

Anna's narrative then moves on to the appearance of Count Godfrey.¹⁶ He initially is merely an auxiliary to Anna's allegation that Bohemund's had a secret master plan for overthrowing Alexius and seizing Constantinople. Skirmishing and then serious fighting breaks out as Godfrey's troops respond to the rumour that the Emperor has seized some of the counts who had gone on an embassy to the imperial court. In the midst of this confusion and warring the Latins apparently manage to be totally oblivious to Holy Week. They finally make an attack on Constantinople on Thursday, April 2nd 1097, in 'the supreme week of the year in which the Saviour suffered an ignominious death

15. *Alexiad*, X 315-18.

16. *Alexiad*, X 318-23.

on behalf of the whole world'. Alexius reproves the Latins for having no reverence for the day. In the *Alexiad* the knights remain faithless barbarians. They have no Holy Tradition and cannot be considered as living within the Church for they conspicuously fail to love God. Anna Comnena's carefully constructed chronology has usually been accepted, although the dating of the fighting in Holy Week remains controversial. Contemporary Latin chroniclers record a different story line. Albert of Aix's account provides a completely different chronology and interpretation, while the text of the *Gesta Francorum* makes no mention of fighting on a holy day. This brief account is consistent with some of the detail revealed in Albert's narration.¹⁷ Anna has probably chosen to be more than wilful with regard to these dates. In her account sacrilegious Latins battle in the most revered week of the Christian calendar. She pressurises the reader into agreeing with her proposition that the crusaders are ignorant, violent and loathsome. After a lengthy interlude of yet more Trojan war metaphors and heroics, this time from Anna's husband, the Caesar Nicephorus, Hugh of Vermandois re-enters Anna's narrative as an emissary who attempts to persuade Godfrey to yield to the Emperor's wishes. In the course of these discussions Anna records Hugh making the following blunt statement: 'we ought to have stayed in our countries and kept our hands off other people'.¹⁸ These words are surely of her own

17. No mention is made in Albert of Aix's chronicle, or in the *Gesta Francorum*, that fighting occurred during Holy Week. Albertus Aquensis, *Historia Hierosolymitana* II: *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. Rosalind Hill (London 1962) 6; S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, I: *The First Crusade* (London 1968) 152. In an excessively brief footnote he writes that 'Anna's account is far more convincing than Albert's and may be accepted as true', and then refers the reader to Chalandon's *Histoire de la Première Croisade* (Paris 1925). This author merely states 'that in Anna's account there is a precision that is not found in Albert's. Moreover, Anna was a witness'. However, H. Hagenmeyer dates the warfare on January 13th, the ceremony of the hostages on January 20th, and the agreement with the army January 21st: H. Hagenmeyer *Chronologie de la Première Croisade 1094-1100* (Paris 1902) 53-54. Since Anna was merely thirteen years old at the time of these incidents her recollection ought to be considered to be questionable. A subsequent rewriting carried out towards the end of her life probably reconstituted these events into a more polemical mode.

18. *Alexiad*, X 322.

invention; a prominent Latin prince confesses that the whole venture should never have occurred before the main armies have even unified.

The passage of so many armies and the accompanying baggage trains through Byzantine territory was an enormous administrative problem for the Emperor Alexius. Food markets had to be granted, merchandise provided, fodder had to be collected, and alms had to be given to the 'poor'. The crusaders agreed to stay no more than three days in any particular place, excepting the largest of imperial cities. Alexius had to provide escorts and guides as well as larger bodies of troops who could monitor and if necessary discipline errant crusaders. Foraging, raiding and looting must have been endemic because of the large numbers of pilgrims who were not attached to the major parties. Even the princes' armies had to be repeatedly moved on. They all contained large numbers of non-combatants, clerics and humble pilgrims. All these people had to be fed, since food riots almost inevitably led to warfare. The loss of the Asia Minor territories had also made it imperative that the remaining imperial cities were protected and that none were sacked. Alexius sought by means of guides, accompanying troops, and the technique of frequently detaching leaders from the main body of their troops to minimise the risk of several armies assembling simultaneously around the walls of Constantinople.¹⁹ When this kind of conjuncture looked likely the emperor was always prepared to commit imperial troops to a fierce engagement in order to move the crusaders

19. Godfrey of Lorraine's forces arrived two days before Christmas 1096. Their activities proved to be repeatedly difficult to contain. The Lorraine crusaders lost their market rights on several occasions as the imperial authorities attempted to pressurise Godfrey into taking the oath and then into moving his army across the Hellespont. Both sides exchanged hostages; Alexius must have been fairly desperate to resolve the matter since his son and heir, John was the Byzantine hostage. This sustained struggle with the Lorraine army alerted Alexius to the danger the crusader armies might pose to Constantinople itself. Hence he encouraged the subsequent leaders, especially Bohemund and Raymond, to leave their forces, and to journey independently with a small retinue of personal retainers to the capital in order to take the oath of fealty. The whereabouts of the other crusader armies is uncertain. Robert of Flanders and his force arrived in Constantinople after Godfrey but before Bohemund. This reinforces Albert's account of Godfrey's sojourn in Constantinople since there is scarcely any time to allow Robert to come after Godfrey's oath taken

across to Asia Minor. The danger that Alexius had to face was not a secret plot orchestrated by Bohemund. Instead a brawl, or some improvised looting might have precipitated serious fighting which in turn would cause further recrimination and rumour. The convergence of several armies might have finally swamped imperial resources. In these circumstances the threat to Constantinople would have been very real. This situation had looked most likely to occur between April 26th when the South Italian Norman army crossed the Hellespont, and April 27th when the Provençal army arrived at Constantinople. After Count Raymond had left his followers at the city of Rodosto in order to accompany the Byzantine envoys, who had urged him to journey to the capital, the imperial troops attacked and defeated the large Provençal forces. Unlike the episode with Godfrey's warring knights Anna makes no reference to this incident. The Byzantine motive for this assault was possibly punitive, but its more likely that they were acting on the emperor's instructions to delay the Provençal army's advance on the capital. Alexius had also obviously hoped that Count Raymond would have sworn his oath of fealty by the time the Southern French crusaders arrived at

on April 10th, and Bohemund's arrival, which is dated April 15th. But there is in Albert's chronology of events which stretches from late January to April. Both Raymond of Aguilers and the author of the *Gesta Francorum* record that Robert Count of Flanders was present at the meeting between Raymond Count of Saint Gilles, the princes and Alexius. The joint army of Robert Count of Normandy and Stephen Count of Blois is also thought by some historians to have arrived in mid May. However, their route indicates that this army travelled quickly along the via Ignatia and may have been much nearer to the Provençal and South Italian troops than is usually assumed. Alexius would be very clearly worried by the possibility of the union of two Norman armies. The South Italian Norman and Provençal troops were both in the Constantinople area on April 26th and 27th. The last major crusader army, that of Robert Count of Normandy and Stephen of Blois, might have been less than a week behind. Duby has drawn attention to the turbulence that the youth, 'juventus', younger sons created amidst the feudal aristocracy in terms of their recklessness, their provocative and warlike attitudes and their shorter life expectancy. The activities of Tancred and Baldwin, Godfrey's younger brother, appear to be consistent with these ingrained social habits. Both were impatient, turbulent and adventurous, even reckless when warfare was involved. Their frequent aggression created a serious problem for the Byzantine officials and troops. G. Duby, 'Les jeunes dans la société aristocratique dans la France du nord ouest au XII siècle', in Georges Duby, ed., *Hommes et Structures du Moyen Age* (Paris 1973) 213-276.

Constantinople. In general, thanks to Alexius's stratagems and some good will from the crusader princes both sides quickly understood that their own particular aspirations could be realised if they cooperated and this is what generally occurred.

The tailpiece to Anna's narrative of Godfrey's armies contains another apocryphal incident. A haughty knight later referred to as Latinus sits on the emperor's throne, and when reprimanded by Godfrey's brother, Baldwin, referred to Alexius as a peasant. The emperor skilfully lip-read this dialogue and addressed the knight when the crusaders were in the process of leaving. In Anna's narrative Latinus boasts that he is a Frank, and tells how he has repeatedly stood at the cross roads near a sacred shrine in his own country waiting for somebody to challenge him in single combat — nobody came. However, retribution lies in wait for him in the *Alexiad* for at the battle of Dorylaeum Latinus is badly wounded, and put to flight; many of his accompanying band of knights are killed.²⁰ Latin knighthood is thus mocked, chivalry is parodied. Western military prowess is vulnerable because of the notoriously flawed character of the Latin race.

The meeting between the Emperor and his lifelong foe Bohemund appears to go amicably, but Anna plots the deeper currents by revealing what she feels to be Bohemund's fundamental traits: that he is a liar, that he was moody, intensely suspicious, that he is motivated by money, and building up the invective 'that he far surpassed all the Latins in rascality and courage. He was the supreme mischief maker.'²¹ His constant stratagem as 'supreme mischief maker' is to continually plot to conquer Constantinople. Despite the surface accord Anna outlines that he was at work on these schemes even while he is on crusade. Bohemund like most Latins is an epitome of treachery. However, Alexius is, as the reader has come to expect, always able to anticipate and to neutralise the aspirations of even the most powerful of Latin leaders. Rejecting Bohemund's request to be made Grand Domestic of the East Alexius gives wise advice on Turkish military

20. *Alexiad*, X 325-6, and book XI 341.

21. *Alexiad*, X 326-29.

strategems. The relationship between the two men is transitional; a brief episode between the earlier conflicts at Larissa and Dyrrachium and the struggle for the city of Antioch, where Bohemund's schemes constantly undermine and work against the imperial interest. Some of the most effective passages in the *Alexiad* deal with the subsequent titanic struggle between Bohemund and Alexius in the years 1105-8.²² The Byzantine emperor does finally enjoy a complete personal triumph over his formidable adversary. The Empire is saved from a massive invading Latin army. However, the treaty of Devol remained only the legalistic framework which has still to be imposed on the Norman ruler in Antioch. Alexius is unable to do this. Byzantine hegemony in that region was only achieved many years later in the reign of the Emperor Manuel. Moreover, Alexius's reputation in the West is badly tarnished by Bohemund's recruitment campaigns in France, where the *Gesta Francorum* is used effectively to help mobilise anti-Byzantine sentiment.²³ Finally any reader of the *Alexiad* becomes aware of Anna's paradoxical position over Bohemund. The poetic representation of the Norman is fractured. He is both nauseating, and an object of repressed desire. Despite the negative presentation Bohemund is uninhibited, his actions are wild, disruptive and powerful. His energy and masculinity are guiltily admitted. Only Alexius the emperor and father is a more triumphant character.

The last prince to arrive at Constantinople was Raymond Count of Saint Gilles. Here Anna's history is obviously chronologically flawed.²⁴ Several Latin chroniclers recall that Raymond was truculent when Alexius requested the oath of fealty. The difficulty

22. *Alexiad*, the Treaty of Devol, 1108, book XIII 424-34.

23. R.B. Yewdale, *Bohemund I, Prince of Antioch* (Princeton 1924); A C. Krey, 'A Neglected Passage in the Gesta', in *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays Presented to D.C. Munro*, ed. L. Paetow (New York (1928) 57-78.

24. *Alexiad*, X 329-331; J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill 'The Convention between Alexius Comnenus and Raymond of Saint Gilles', *American Historical Review* 58 (1953) 322-8; a similar viewpoint is expressed in J.H. Hill, 'Raymond of Saint Gilles in Urban's plan for Greek and Latin Friendship', *Speculum* 26 (1951) 255-276; also J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill, *Raymond IV Count of Toulouse* (Syracusa University Press 1962).

was that Raymond had not formally sworn an oath of fealty to the king of France, and was disinclined to undertake such a ritual with the Byzantine emperor. He was also sorely aggrieved at the rough handling of his troops by the Byzantine forces. Raymond of Aguilers, who was chaplain to the count, records that both Alexius and the Count went to trial. The Emperor remonstrated with Raymond complaining that the Provençal army had devastated villages and towns. Once again none of these details are outlined in the *Alexiad*. Raymond lost the trial. The crusader princes, Godfrey of Lorraine, Robert Count of Flanders and especially Bohemund pressurised Raymond, but he remained obstinant until an oath of non-aggression and mutual support was arranged. In the words of Raymond of Aguilers 'Alexius gave him little of worldly goods because of his intransigence'.²⁵ It then appears that Raymond and probably Adhemar, who had arrived sometime after Raymond, stayed behind to have further discussions with Alexius. The wily Alexius realising the extent of Raymond's wealth and resources cultivated him as an obvious foil to Bohemund. This Byzantine-Provençal rapprochement is decisively established in the struggles of the siege of Antioch. Anna's account presents Alexius as immediately recognising Raymond's 'purity and love of the truth'. This was not so. The latter was initially the least cooperative of the princes. It is likely that the situation was ameliorated by the arrival of the papal legate in Constantinople. Anna's account unfortunately contains no reference to Adhemar of Le Puy. The papal legate was a person

25. Raymond of Aguilers writes: 'At this juncture, following consultation with his Provençals, the Count swore that he would not, either through himself or through others, sully the life and honour of the Emperor. When he was cited concerning homage, he replied that he would not pay homage because of the peril to his rights. We may add that Alexius gave him little of worldly goods because of his intransigence'. Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux* III (Paris 1866) 141. The most modern edition is *Le Liber de Raymond d'Aguilers*, ed. J.H. Hill and L. Hill (Paris 1969).

strategems. The relationship between the two men is transitional; a brief episode between the earlier conflicts at Larissa and Dyrrachium and the struggle for the city of Antioch, where Bohemund's schemes constantly undermine and work against the imperial interest. Some of the most effective passages in the *Alexiad* deal with the subsequent titanic struggle between Bohemund and Alexius in the years 1105-8.²² The Byzantine emperor does finally enjoy a complete personal triumph over his formidable adversary. The Empire is saved from a massive invading Latin army. However, the treaty of Devol remained only the legalistic framework which has still to be imposed on the Norman ruler in Antioch. Alexius is unable to do this. Byzantine hegemony in that region was only achieved many years later in the reign of the Emperor Manuel. Moreover, Alexius's reputation in the West is badly tarnished by Bohemund's recruitment campaigns in France, where the *Gesta Francorum* is used effectively to help mobilise anti-Byzantine sentiment.²³ Finally any reader of the *Alexiad* becomes aware of Anna's paradoxical position over Bohemund. The poetic representation of the Norman is fractured. He is both nauseating, and an object of repressed desire. Despite the negative presentation Bohemund is uninhibited, his actions are wild, disruptive and powerful. His energy and masculinity are guiltily admitted. Only Alexius the emperor and father is a more triumphant character.

The last prince to arrive at Constantinople was Raymond Count of Saint Gilles. Here Anna's history is obviously chronologically flawed.²⁴ Several Latin chroniclers recall that Raymond was truculent when Alexius requested the oath of fealty. The difficulty

22. *Alexiad*, the Treaty of Devol, 1108, book XIII 424-34.

23. R.B. Yewdale, *Bohemund I, Prince of Antioch* (Princeton 1924); A.C. Krey, 'A Neglected Passage in the Gesta', in *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays Presented to D.C. Munro*, ed. L. Paetow (New York (1928) 57-78.

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of considerable stature and tact.²⁶ He subsequently chaired the meetings of the council of princes. It is therefore likely that this is a deliberate exclusion by Anna, since if she admitted to Adhemar's existence, she would have had to introduce Pope Urban as the instigator of the First Crusade. Anna's characterisation of Alexius's strategy relies on his lack of knowledge about the crusade. Any reference to Pope Urban and his legate had therefore to be removed from Byzantine history. This exclusion also applied to Urban's earlier unionist initiative of 1089.²⁷ Anna was unable to accept or to realise that the Byzantine Empire clearly lacked the resources in the 1090s to recover the lost territories of Asia Minor and Armenia. She portrays her father as ever responsive and ingenious. In his youth his impetuosity had destroyed imperial armies and had brought the empire to the brink of annihilation. Each time Anna allows Alexius to recover his fortunes because of his mental and physical prowess. In the *Alexiad* the idealism of an homeric hero always overcomes the most formidable of material obstacles. However, Alexius was a wiser individual than his daughter. His perception was that the alluring power of the Latin West was paradoxical; the latent and violent energies of their masses might threaten to humiliate the grandeur of New Rome; the Celts were capable of humbling the status of the imperial throne; they could engulf the empire's territories; but if these titanic forces were skillfully managed, then

26. A. C. Krey, 'Urban's Crusade — Success or Failure?', *American Historical Review* 53 (1948) 235-250; J. A. Brundage, 'Adhemar of Puy: the bishop and his Critics', *Speculum* 34 (1959) 201-212; B. Hamilton 'The First Crusade and the Eastern Churches', in *The Latin Church and the Crusader States* (London 1980) and J. France, 'The Crisis of the First Crusade: from the Defeat of Kerbogah to the Departure from Aqra', *B* 40 (1970) 276-308. Patriarch Simeon's letters, nos VI, XI, in Hagenmayer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, (Innsbruck 1901) 141-2, 146-9.

27. S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford 1955) 61-2, 71-2, 76-9; W. Holtzmann, 'Die Unionsverhandlungen zwischen Kaiser Alexios I und Papst Urban II im Jahre 1089', in *Beiträge zur Reichs- und Papstgeschichte des Hohen Mittelalters* (Bonn 1957) 79-105; B. Leib, 'Les Patriarches de Byzance et la politique religieuse d'Alexius Ier Comnène (1081-118)', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 40 (1952) 201-221; Bernard Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States* (London 1980); B. Leib, *Rome, Kiev et Byzance à la fin du XI siècle* (Paris 1924).

they might instead become the instrumental basis for the regeneration of Byzantium.²⁸

Book eleven of the *Alexiad* continues the narrative of the crusaders' activities in Asia Minor and Northern Syria. There are several obvious errors in Anna's presentation: Peter the Hermit is promoted to being 'the bishop', instead of Adhemar, and then he is confused with Peter Bartholomew, the poor pilgrim who discovered the Holy Lance, which Anna dubs the holy nail. The epic qualities of the siege of Jerusalem and the visitation to the holy sites are underplayed, presumably because of her decision to ignore the spiritual and eschatological features of the crusade. Her account, however, does contain several important events. There is a lengthy and informed narrative of the siege of Nicaea, which reveals the comprehensive nature of Byzantine diplomatic activity undertaken by Boutoumites to save the city from being sacked.²⁹ The capture of Nicaea gave the Byzantines access to Asia Minor. Alexius's earlier military efforts had been restricted to coastal raiding and the consolidation of imperial territory in the vicinity of Nicomedia. With the recovery of Nicaea the implicit threat posed by the former Seljuk capital of Rum was permanently removed. At the final meeting between Alexius and the crusader princes at the military camp in the vicinity of Pelecanum there was a firm reminder to all counts not to begin the march to Antioch until they had undertaken their act of homage and fealty. Tancred on this occasion was truculent, but after Bohemund's intervention, he was humbled and took the oath.

Anna records that Alexius appointed his senior commander Tatikios to be the guide to the crusader armies and was instructed to help them over food supplies and linguistic interpretation. The success of the Christian armies at the battle of Dorylaeum on

28. J. Shepard, 'Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy Towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Byantium and the West c.850-c.1200*, ed. J.D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam 1988) 114-115.

29. *Alexiad*, XI 333-41. The first letter of the crusader princes written from Antioch refers to an agreement the Emperor made with them in mid-May. This probably refers to a meeting at Pelakanum before the siege was completed. Once Nicaea was captured Alexius distributed generous gifts to the knights, including gold, silver, robes and horses, while alms and food were given to the foot soldiers and poor.

July 1st 1097 opened up the way into the interior of Asia Minor, and then the Turks were swept away in the subsequent battles at Heraclea and Augustopolis. The organised basis of Seljuk and Danishmend rule was thrown into complete confusion. The nomadic turcomans of the interior were unable to constitute a military challenge to the powerful Christian armies. Tatakios's subsequent choice of the route was not eccentric, for it followed the old military roads 'into the land of the Armenians'. In these areas Turkish influence was tenuous, and usually disputed by local Christians and Armenian Christians. Despite the periodic difficulties of the road the Byzantines were able to appoint their representatives and garrisons at Caesaria, in Cappadocia, and at the cities of Plastencia, Coxon, and Marash. It was Tancred's and Baldwin's initiative in Cilicia that was potentially problematic.

While the crusader armies moved into the interior of Asia Minor Caesar John Ducas was able to undertake a most important campaign in Western Asia Minor.³⁰ Anna's account is invaluable for it allows us to perceive how important this campaign was in Alexius's strategy for restoring Byzantine power in Asia Minor.

The Caesar's forces wiped out the Turkish rulers in the western cities of Smyrna and Ephesus, thereby definitively concluding the earlier difficult struggle with Tzachas. The elimination of Tzachas brought to an end the raids and devastation of the Ionian islands which had occurred during the years 1089-1090. It also consolidated the imperial administration in Crete and Cyprus, which had both defected in 1091. A permanent Turkish presence on the western littoral of Asia Minor was removed, and Byzantine troops were able to recover the cities in the Maeander river valley. The immediate consequence of the crusaders' military victories and Caesar John's campaign was that the Byzantines gained direct access to the major military roads which went south to Cilicia and Antioch.

Without waiting for the final phase of John Ducas' campaign Alexius was able to transport the main Byzantine army into the

30. Caesar John Ducas's campaigns, *Alexiad*, XI 346-348.

interior of Asia Minor knowing that Constantinople and more significantly Nicaea were secure, and that all the Turkish potentates behind the line of the Byzantine march had been eliminated. Anna's narrative stresses the earnestness of her father's desire to go to the aid of the crusaders. Alexius's intention was clearly to recover Antioch. Assuming he would have taken the route that was used by John II and Manuel I on their passages to Antioch the Byzantine army would have journeyed on from Philomelium to Attalia through the Cilician gates and across the Cilician plain to arrive at Antioch. With this city under imperial rule Byzantine power would have been reasserted in Northern Syria. However, all this remains conjecture, for if there is a turning point in the fortunes of Alexius's involvement with the First Crusade it surely occurs in mid-June 1098 at Philomelium.³¹ In the imperial camp the decisive information was given to the Emperor by William Grandmesnil, Stephen, Count of Blois and Peter of Aulps. Using ropes to lower himself down the city walls William, accompanied by his brother Aubry, Guy Trousseau and Lambert the Poor had fled the beleaguered city of Antioch on the night of Thursday June 10th 1098. William had seen Kerbogha's troops defeat an initial Christian sortie and obviously knew how desperate matters were in the city. Anna's account contains some pertinent information on Bohemund's effort to curtail the activities of the Turks in the citadel, and to defend the walls against Kerbogha's army. According to the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* Stephen of Blois travelled from the castle called Alexandretta to the vicinity of Antioch and had viewed the full extent of Kerbogha's camp from the top of a mountain. Peter of Aulps had probably journeyed from Caesaria or Plastencia and brought information concerning Turkish troop movements in the upper Euphrates river area. Alexius surely assumed their information was reliable for William and Peter were knights in the service of the empire. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* also states that Stephen of Blois had been elected commander-in-chief by all the crusader leaders, while another eyewitness chronicler,

31. *Alexiad*, XI 348-50.

Raymond of Aguilers, wrote that Stephen had been chosen crusading leader before the fall of Antioch.³² He was thus a figure of considerable stature. His letters to his wife, Adele, reveal him to have been sympathetic to the Byzantine emperor. All three knights were bound by an oath of fealty to Alexius. In the *Alexiad* they all affirmed on oath that the collapse in Antioch was complete. Anna seeks to avoid the issue of her father's betrayal of his crusader allies, by stating that the three knights gave the emperor the wrong information. She reinforces this duplicity with a lengthy passage on the turbulent nature of the Celtic race and the fragility of their fighting capacity. Irresistible when charging into the midst of the enemy's line they were in her opinion easy to defeat by the technique of laying ambushes. In these circumstances their boldness vanishes. Anna then provocatively adds the Celts were planning to desert their fortifications, handing them over to the enemy, 'intent only on the preservation of their own lives by running away'.³³ She has also sustained throughout this episode the theme of the sinister threat to Alexius's forces from a large army commanded by Ishmael, the son of the Sultan of

32. Stephen of Blois's letter to his wife, Adele, written from Nicaea, June 24th 1097. His letters are numbers IV and X in Hagenmayer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, 138-40, 149-52. '... that coward Stephen, count of Chartres whom all our leaders had elected commander-in-chief pretended to be very ill, and went shamefully to another castle which is called Alexandretta. When we were shut up in the city, lacking help to save us, we waited each day for him to bring us aid', *Gesta Francorum*, IX, xxvii, 63 (ed. Hill) and Raymond of Aguilers *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, VIII, in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux* III (Paris 1866), chapter XI.

It is likely that Stephen had been sent to achieve a rendezvous with the main Byzantine army, which the council of Princes assumed was marching on Antioch. The crusaders used Alexandretta and Lattakiah to maintain links with Byzantine Cyprus. Food supplies came from the island, as did information on Byzantine activities. The papal legate Adhemar might have also visited the island. Raymond of Aguilers records that at the siege of Arqua Count Raymond of Saint-Gilles sent William Hugh of Monteil, brother of Adhemar, Bishop of Le Puy, to Lattakiah, where Adhemar's cross and hood had been left. This raises the question as to why they were there in the first place. Raymond gives no clues as to how this came about. Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux* III; XI.

33. *Alexiad*, XI 349.

Chorosan. Under these circumstances Anna demonstrates that Alexius's decision becomes inevitable; the interests of the empire dictated that he could not risk the main Byzantine army in a highly hostile situation. The march to Antioch is abandoned. In Northern Syria the decisive battle occurred on June 28th. It was the remarkable fusion of the crusaders' military resilience with the popular eschatological mentality which brought about the crusaders' Antiochene triumph. The text of Anna's *Alexiad* had repeatedly reviled both the ethos of Latin knighthood, and the pious fervour of humble pilgrims.

A lively alternative account of the events at Philomelium is to be found in the *Gesta Francorum*.³⁴ Here perhaps coincidentally Bohemund's brother, Guy, plays a forthright role in the debates in the imperial camp. The anonymous author informs his readership that Guy was an honourable knight, whose code of chivalric conduct leads him to curse his own birth, and to wish for his death, especially in the form of martyrdom which he believes Bohemund has undergone. Guy expresses his amazement that God has allowed his people to be destroyed. Apparently this rumour of the crusaders' destruction 'seemed so grievous to the whole army that none of them, bishop, abbot, clerk or laymen, dared call upon the Name of Christ for many days'. All this angst, grief and guilt is really unnecessary as the reader/listener already knows, for this situation has been caused by a falsehood. Bohemund is not killed, but is instrumental in capturing Antioch and defeating the Turks. In the *Gesta Francorum* it is Stephen who is treacherous,

34. *Gesta Francorum*, ed. Hill, pages 63-5 (for Stephen's flight, and the intervention of Guy at Philomelium on behalf of his half-brother, Bohemund). Guy was a mercenary knight in the Byzantine army. It is also likely that these passages accompany the earlier interpolation identified by A.C. Krey. Both passages relate to the crucial matter of Bohemund's oath to the Emperor Alexius and the Emperor's obligations to his vassal. The legality of the Norman claim to Antioch depended on demonstrating that Bohemund was released from his oath. The popularisation of the text of the *Gesta Francorum* was associated with Bohemund's recruiting tour of France and the subsequent crusade against Byzantium. For Tatikios's earlier departure from Antioch see J. France, 'The Departure of Tatikios from the crusader Army', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (November 1971) 137-147, and also Basile Skoulutos, *Les personnages byzantins de l'Aléxiade: analyse prosopographique et synthèse* (Louvain 1980).

for he gives false information, and behaves in a cowardly manner. Alexius's crime is his arbitrary abrogation of his sworn obligations as overlord to the crusader princes. The anonymous writer demonstrates that Guy's brotherly affection was a truer guide to the direction the army should have taken. This episode is made more vivid through the author's dramatic use of direct speech. What is common to both Anna's presentation of the events at Philomelium and the account in the *Gesta Francorum* is the recognition of the issue of the oath of fealty the crusader princes took to the Byzantine emperor, and his reciprocal obligations to his liege men. In the Norman perspective Alexius is portrayed in a manner that is consistent to the position outlined in the letter drafted to the Pope in Bohemund's name at Antioch on September 11th 1097: a deceitful ruler. The characterisation in the *Gesta Francorum* relies upon a consensual view that the Byzantine emperor was known to be treacherous, crafty, and a permanent hindrance to the efforts of the crusaders. In the *Alexiad* Anna seeks to demonstrate that Alexius behaved in a wise and honourable manner. From her point of view the interests of the Empire emphatically dictated that the Celts had to be abandoned. On the technical matter of the oath she presented her father as being misinformed. In the final analysis the text of the *Alexiad* seeks to establish that it was the Latin knights at Philomelium who betrayed their former comrades, the beleaguered crusaders.

In Antioch Bohemund persuaded Tatikios to leave the crusader camp, and the Norman secured the capture of the city through his negotiations with the Armenian Firouz. By a mixture of personal courage, military ability and determination Bohemund was able to mount an effective case for his control of the city. Alexius's position was strongly defended by Count Raymond. The council of princes agreed after some factional infighting to send Hugh of Vermandois to the imperial court with the plea that Alexius was to 'come and take over the city and fulfil the obligations which he had undertaken towards them'. With the city under a Byzantine administration the terms of the oath of fealty would be met. None of this came about principally because of the death of the papal legate, Adhemar, on August 1st 1098. It is here that Anna Comnena's 'silence' over the papal legate becomes so significant.

What has led the princess to systematically exclude from the *Alexiad* all references to clerical unionist policies? Clearly her strongest prejudices were aroused by any form of dialogue undertaken by her father with the Papacy. The consistency of this exclusion throughout the *Alexiad* is surely indicative that Anna felt she had something important to hide. And there is yet more circumstantial evidence for a Papal Imperial Pact. Leib, Krey and Bernard Hamilton have consistently sought to keep the matter of the union of the churches at the heart of the narrative of the First Crusade. While the *Alexiad* only demonstrates the Byzantine absence from this dialogue, the events of the First Crusade, more especially the activities of the Adhemar, the papal legate indicate a partial resolution in the Antiochene area of the form of the newly united church. The legate's initial joint encyclical letter with Symeon II, the orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, had held out the promise of the reunion of the churches. A second letter from Symeon, 'the patriarch of Jerusalem, the bishops both Greek and Latin, and the whole army of the Lord and the Church' appealed to the West for more Christians to take up the crusading cause. It also threatened those who had failed to fulfil their crusader vow with excommunication.³⁵ Jerusalem was the site of Christ's passion, and it remained the prime focus of the crusade, for all crusaders had sworn a vow to deliver the holy city. This theme had been a omnipotent feature of Pope Urban's preaching of the crusade. The Patriarch's letters demonstrate that the Greek orthodox patriarch from the Holy Land was in full communion with the Western Church. In the liberated city of Antioch John Oxite, the orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, was personally enthroned by Adhemar in the newly consecrated cathedral. John's canonical authority was recognised over all the Latin and Greek clergy resident in the Antiochene patriarchate. Although Anna Comnena refuses to acknowledge these unionist policies the text of the *Alexiad* does contain a form of ecclesiastical administration that is strikingly similar to the clerical agreement concerning Patriarch John. These are the clerical terms which Alexius

35. Symeon's letters are numbers VI and IX in Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, 141-2, 146-9.

made Bohemund swear to uphold in the treaty of Devol, September 1108; 'I (Bohemund) agree and swear by the God worshipped in the church of Antioch that the patriarch of that city will not be of our race, but a man whom your majesties will promote, one of the clergy of the great Church in Constantinople. For in the future the throne of Antioch will be occupied by such a man; he will carry out the duties of an archbishop, the laying on of hands and the other business of the church according to the privileges of this cathedral'.³⁶ If Antioch had passed under imperial administration in 1098 the patriarch would have been in communion with both the great Church of Constantinople and the Roman Catholic Church.

While he was alive Adhemar had been able to remind Bohemund at the princes' council meetings that his legatine position as representative of the pope meant that he, Adhemar, was Bohemund's feudal overlord. Bohemund was thus constrained by an oath of fealty to the Pope and to the Byzantine emperor. Adhemar's death profoundly altered the balance of political forces in the crusader camp. Confirmation of this fundamental shift can be clearly seen in the crusader princes' letter drafted by Bohemund on September 11th 1098 which informed Pope Urban that 'Antioch was bound to the Roman religion and faith' and which referred to Greek, Armenian, Syrian and Jacobite Christians as 'heretics'. Bohemund specifically asked the Pope himself to come to Antioch to root out heresy and to 'separate us, your obedient sons, from the unjust Emperor who has made us many good promises, but has not at all carried them out. For he has caused us all the ill and hindrance that he could'.³⁷ Subsequently when Alexius sent envoys with a letter for Bohemund which remonstrated with him over Norman activity in Cilicia and Antioch, Bohemund was able to point to Alexius' inability to fulfil his obligations as overlord to those crusader princes who had

36. *Alexiad*, XIII 430-1.

37. 'Bohemund, Raymond Count of Saint Gilles, Godfrey, Duke of Lorraine, Robert, Count of Normandy, Robert, Count of Flanders, and Eustace, Count of Boulogne to Pope Urban II', written from Antioch, September 11th 1098. Letter XVI in Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, 161-5; B. Hamilton, 'The First Crusade and the Eastern Churches', in *The Latin Church in the Crusader States* (London 1980) 6-9.

taken an oath of fealty to him. Anna records that the emperor upon receiving the reply knew that Bohemund 'was his old self again, incorrigible as ever; clearly the frontiers of the Roman Empire must be firmly held and Bohemund's unbridled ambition must somehow be checked'.³⁸ The struggle between the two rulers was to enter a new phase that was only to be resolved at the Treaty of Devol in September 1108. Anna had always rightly recognised what a formidable threat to the empire the South Italian Normans were. Consequently many chapters of the *Alexiad* are taken up with the bitter struggle between Robert Guiscard, Bohemund and Alexius. These associations were undoubtedly sharpened by the coincidental point that while Anna was still working on her history the prominent cities of Corinth and Thebes, were ravaged and sacked by the forces of the Norman basileus, Roger II, 'king of Sicily, of the duchy of Apulia and the principality of Capua'.³⁹

The influence of the political affairs of Manuel's reign upon the final shape and structure of the *Alexiad* has only occasionally been stressed by historians. It is surely a highly significant point. Anna was only a child when the events of the First Crusade were under way. These early recollections are not a sufficient basis for a thorough history. And there is no indication that Anna made any particular preparations during her father's reign for the production of the *Alexiad*. She certainly never stated that she began the project, or even thought of undertaking this project while Alexius was alive. She presents the *Alexiad* as the natural continuation of the historical writings of her husband, the Caesar Bryennius, and presumably was only commenced on his death in 1137. In book fourteen of the *Alexiad*, she states that she had collected most of the evidence herself for her father's reign. This process had largely occurred 'in the reign of the third emperor after Alexius'. This could only refer to Manuel I Comnenus.⁴⁰ It is unclear as to when Anna precisely wrote chapters X and XI.

38. *Alexiad*, XI 358.

39. M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204* (London 1984) 164-173.

40. *Alexiad*, XIV 460.

But it is likely that she carried out numerous revisions and rewritings to the *Alexiad*. This process continued well into the first decade of Manuel I Comnenus's reign. Although humble former soldiers and veterans of her father's reign were able to communicate with her, the more important political figures, and Alexius's former advisors were either banned from any contact, or intimidated by the imperial court's attitude towards Anna. This undoubtedly was a consequence of Anna's attempted murderous coup against her brother John. Although confined to her apartments in the monastery tes Kecharitomenes Anna had established a circle of literati and philosophers, who worked to revive the study of Aristotle. This intellectual milieu, and the availability of so much leisure time probably stimulated her interest in writing a history of her father's reign. It is clear that her political estrangement from the ruling emperor was very pronounced. Her political notoriety was not liberalised on her death, which probably occurred between 1153 and 1156. Anna Comnena had clearly made powerful enemies.

The author of her funeral oration, the scholar George Tornikes, formally expressed his surprise that nobody had hitherto written an oration for Anna. His own contribution was discretely delayed.⁴¹ Tornikes is also calculatingly vague over the events associated with Anna's disgrace. He declines to explain why the political exclusion, which had existed throughout her brother John's reign, was sustained until her death. In the *Alexiad* Anna appears to hint that her situation had further deteriorated under the rule of the 'third emperor'. Tornikes also experienced a period of estrangement, principally because of his loyalty to his former

41. R. Browning, 'An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Anna Comnena', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 188 (1962) 1-12, also reprinted in *Studies in Byzantine History, Literature and Education* (London 1977). For the full text see Georges Tornikès, 'Éloge d'Anne Comnène', in J. Darrouzès, *Georges et Démétrios Tornikès, lettres et discours: introduction, texte, analyses, traduction et notes* (Paris 1970) 220-323. In more general terms see R. Browning, 'Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Past and Present* 69 (1975) 3-23, and R. Browning, *Church, State and Learning in Twelfth Century Byzantium* (lecture, London 1981) (Friends of Dr. Williams Library).

patron, the patriarch of Constantinople, Cosmas II Atticus. In 1146 Tornikes had been appointed by Cosmas to the junior of the three professorships of theology in the Patriarchal school, and had composed an inaugural lecture which contained many generous laudations of the patriarch. Subsequently Cosmas II Atticus had been charged with favouritism towards a monk, Niphon, who was suspected of Bogomil tendencies. More significantly the patriarch was suspected of supporting the Emperor's Manuel's disgruntled elder brother, Isaac. These intrigues occurred when Manuel was undertaking important campaigns against the Seljuks in the heart of Anatolia. Nicetas Choniates characterised Cosmas as a profoundly learned man, a saintly figure with strong charitable inclinations. In his account it was 'the cabal of bishops' who accused Cosmas of having secret assignations with Isaac. And it was also their submission that it was the patriarch who had encouraged Isaac to become emperor. That particular clerical cabal was almost certainly loyal to the current Emperor, Manuel. On February 26th 1147 at a church council held in the Blachernae palace, and attended by the imperial entourage the patriarch was formally deposed. Cosmas retaliated by attempting to excommunicate certain officials who were standing around Manuel. He then cursed the Empress Bertha/Irene's womb stating that she should not bear a son. It was a public act of defiance which called upon providence to humiliate the younger brother, while the elder brother's claims to the throne were enhanced. No wonder Manuel had become suspicious of Isaac. This incident had deep reverberations throughout the Byzantine court, and it demonstrated the familial tensions that originated with Manuel's succession to the imperial throne. Nicetas Choniates also used the incident to highlight what he felt to be Manuel's increasingly authoritative and arbitrary rule. According to this chronicler the initial years of his reign were 'free of unjust and base gain; he (Manuel) was a sea of munifence, an abyss of mercy affable to the genial and unrivalled in imperial virtue, still possessing a guileless soul and ingenuous disposition'; but 'when he came to manhood, he ruled more autocratically, treating his subjects not as free men, but as if they were servants who belonged to

him by inheritance'.⁴² This transition had apparently been completed shortly before the arrival in Byzantium of the Second Crusade.

Several important themes have now become intertwined: both Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates refer to the crusaders as a 'cloud of enemies, a death dealing pestilence'; while four years after his accession Manuel's rule is still subject to intrigue and criticism. In Byzantium there was a deep suspicion of, and hostility to Latin manners, attitudes and culture from certain traditionalist court and clerical factions. This is an appropriate context for a receptive response to the crusader themes which are mapped out in the *Alexiad*. The very rigidity of the imperial administration's response to Anna Comnena is indicative of a fraught political situation.

The root of this instability lay with the uncertainties and rumours about Manuel's accession and proclamation as emperor on April 5th 1143 in a remote region on the borders of Cilicia and Syria. Both Cinnamus and Choniates give elaborate and detailed outlines of the incident of the Emperor's John's hunting accident, his deathbed address, in which he chose his youngest son, Manuel, as his successor, and John's subsequent death. Choniates states that John crowned his son with the imperial fillet and put on him the purple-bordered paludamentum. The troops and nobles then proclaimed Manuel Emperor of the Romans. The Holy scriptures were brought forth and everyone at the camp confirmed on them his goodwill and loyalty to Manuel. According to Choniates the initiator of these ceremonies was the grand domestic John Axouch.⁴³ However, as Paul Magdalino has recently pointed out Choniates is the only author who gives John Axouch this constructive role. Robert Browning and Paul Magdalino argue that the matter of Manuel's accession and

42. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, chapter 60. For a careful analysis of Choniates' criticism of Manuel's rule see Paul Magdalino, 'Aspects of Twelfth Century Byzantine Kaiserkritik', *Speculum* 58 (1983) 326-46.

43. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, chapter 42-49.

coronation is a more complicated affair than either Cinnamus or Choniates will admit.⁴⁴ Browning refers to the evidence from an anonymous panegyric upon Patriarch Michael II Oxeites, 1143-6, which was apparently delivered after his enthronement, and which contains an account of the succession of Manuel. This piece contains a long description of the birth and education of Manuel and his famous prophetic dream. This dream, together with Manuel's exploits on his father's campaigns, and the successive deaths of his elder brothers, Alexius and Andronicus, demonstrate the hand of Providence in elevating Manuel to the imperial throne. In this account John II died while hunting as a result of a wound inflicted by a mysterious assassin. Particular importance is attached to the support given to Manuel by the Varangian guard. Paul Magdalino stresses William of Tyre's narrative, which attributes the procurement of the throne for Manuel to an unnamed mystikos, while John Axouch, the *megas domesticus*, 'was greatly concerned that the imperial power should be reserved to Isaac'. It seems that Manuel I Comnenus was heavily indebted to Latin influences in the Imperial army. Rumour and scandal could have easily magnified his own role in the affair; perhaps there was even the suggestion of complicity in a murder. Retrospectively Manuel's elevation to the imperial throne on April 5th 1143 was surprising simply because for most of his father's reign he, Manuel, had had three elder brothers. All of them were alive when John II Comnenus set off with the imperial army from his training camp in 1141 for Cilicia and Antioch. Cinnamus even writes that John intended to grant Cilicia, Antioch, Attaleia and Cyprus to Manuel as 'his share'. However, the eldest son, the officially designated heir and co-emperor, Alexius, died on August 2nd 1142 at Attalia, and Andronicus, then the eldest son, died shortly after escorting his brother's body back to Constantinople. The imperial aspirations of the surviving third brother, Isaac, who had also accompanied

44. Paul Magdalino, 'Isaac Sebastokrator (III), John Axouch and a Case of Mistaken Identity', *BMGS* 11 (1987) 207-214; and R. Browning, 'The Death of John II Comnenus', *B* 31 (1961) 228-35.

Andronicus to Constantinople, were then passed over. Manuel's elevation was regarded as an act of providence by his allies; but amongst several powerful cliques his accession was obviously considered to be inappropriate.

The uncertainties and rivalries set in motion with Manuel's proclamation as emperor in Cilicia persistently reappeared during the early years of his reign. One such incident occurred at Melangeia, between the years 1144 and 1146. During dinner in the midst of a series of ceremonial speeches in praise of Manuel a violent brawl broke out. Andronicus Comnenus after strongly criticizing the sebastokrator, Isaac, was only narrowly saved from being beheaded because Manuel raised his hand to deflect Isaac's blow, while John Ducas placed a horse whip in the way of the descending sword. The Emperor was wounded on the wrist and carried the scar for the rest of his life. Paul Magdalino establishes that it was John Axouch, the *megas stratarches* who had precipitated the confrontation, since he had chosen to greatly exalt John Comnenus' exploits at the expense of his son, Manuel. This had outraged the emperor's entourage, while Isaac clearly approved of John Axouch's comments. Isaac was thereby implicated with a possible intrigue. He had made a most explicit act of public hostility to the emperor. Consequentially the sebastokrator was temporarily banded from Manuel's presence. John Axouch lost the privilege of fixing the seals to charters confirming imperial grants. These punishments were considered to be modest. Manuel was clearly wary of dismissing or chastising John Axouch, which is indicative of the *megas stratarches*' weighty political influence.

This revealing incident of Comnenian familial tension must be considered in relation to the controversial nature of Manuel's accession on April 5th 1143, and the bitter struggle with the Patriarch Cosmas II Atticus in 1147. The lack of a male heir weakened Manuel's position as Emperor. A barren union between Manuel and Bertha/Irene would revive the imperial claims of the elder Comnenian brother, Isaac. The events of Melangeia demonstrate that Isaac still retained the support of John Axouch, who had been the chief of staff of both the eastern and western armies, and who had been the emperor John's favoured minister. Moreover, if Magdalino's interpretation is accepted, John Axouch

had not procured the capital for Manuel in 1143, and while the Emperor John was mortally wounded had argued for Isaac's right to the succession. The prospect, or existence of an alliance between the Patriarch, his father's former chief minister, and his elder brother, Isaac, would have made Manuel's position as emperor truly precarious. The relevance of Manuel's rule was also criticised in dismissive references to his excessive youth. His supporters sought to invert this theme in order to demonstrate his prodigious abilities, and there were several contemporary stories about his excellent capacity to rule being recognised by several holy men. These fables did not dispel the intrigue, for his opponents continued to refer to the need for an older and more mature man, and for a ruler who would be liberal and responsive to the senate and other areas of civilian privilege. In these difficult times Manuel was clearly aware of the necessity to find support in the Orthodox Church. He bought his way in using his father's accumulated bullion. Prior to his arrival in Constantinople in 1143 Manuel issued a golden bull donating two hundred pounds in silver coin annually to the clergy of the Hagia Sophia, while two hundred pounds of gold coins were taken from the imperial palace and deposited on the holy altar of the Great Church. These actions obviously helped to secure his coronation. The ceremony was performed by the newly elected patriarch, Michael. Subsequently a golden bull issued in 1144 exempted all priests from extraordinary state taxation. In 1148 Manuel confirmed the property rights of bishops, metropolitans and the patriarch. His liberalism towards the church over matters of income, land grants and fiscal privileges was undertaken primarily as a matter of political expediency.

All this poses the obvious question as to what issues made Manuel unpopular within the wider Comnenian family and with the various cliques at the imperial court and in the church. The most explicit answer is because of his known sympathy for Latins, which was something even the admiring Cinnamus could not share. The First Crusade had the deepest repercussions for Alexius I Comnenus' reign, while the Second Crusade and the permanence of the crusading ethos were to have similarly profound affects throughout Manuel's long reign. Before 1147 Manuel's policies

had a strong element of continuity with those of his father, John II: in the East, the offensives against the Turks in Asia Minor, the military and diplomatic pressures on Antioch and a heightened profile throughout Outremer. In the West Manuel supported the Norman exiles from Southern Italy, while he looked to the alliance with the western emperor as a means to contain Norman aspirations and activities. The Second Crusade brought two of the most powerful rulers of the Christian west, the Capetian king Louis VII, and the German emperor Conrad III, into the crusading movement. The influential and charismatic Bernard of Clairvaux had been the instrumental preacher, while the Abbot of the prestigious monastery Cluny was a committed crusader. The military orders, the Knights Templars and the Knights of Saint John corresponded regularly with the French court. The organisation of the crusade remained the primary responsibility of the Pope of Rome. The full weight of western crusading fervour and activity posed a tremendous challenge to the people of the Byzantium.⁴⁵ Some sections of Byzantine society may even have realised that the preaching of a new crusade was merely the temporary culmination of an ever present appeal.

To return to Anna's *Alexiad* and the matter of the stature of her father's reign: is it likely as she states that Alexius' deeds had been entirely forgotten by the 1140s? Is this not merely a literary device? It would have been politically dangerous to have explicitly admitted that the *Alexiad* had a direct and very obvious relevance to the events of the 1140s. In fact it can be accepted that the central themes associated with Alexius' reign underpinned the rule of both John and Manuel and even the brief regency of Alexius II. Anna surely sought to hold up the example of her father's reign as mirror in which might be disparagingly reflected several of the key policies then being currently pursued by the young emperor, more especially those which dealt with the Latin West: the Papacy, the South Italian Normans and in particular the Crusading movement. At a superficial level, and in matters of personal morality Manuel's

45. R.C. Smail, 'Latin Syria and the West 1149-1187', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19 (1969) 1-20.

amorous sexual affairs and involvement with his niece, Theodora, at the expense of his wife, Irene, could easily be contrasted with Anna's idealised presentation of her parents' relationship. Theirs was a homely family life. Christian values were rigorously upheld. According to this fiction Alexius' death was initially met in a stoical manner. The depths of personal tragedy were fully plumbed. These fictional presentations hide the indecision associated with Alexius's last years, which was of course the direct consequence of the repeated interventions of the Empress Irene and Anna in their struggle with John Comnenus.

Anna's presentation of her father has also to be considered within the Byzantine tradition of *Kaiserkritik*. Traditionally there were four essential qualities which should adorn the ideal emperor: courage, righteousness, prudence or moderation, and good sense. These categories are certainly embedded in the *Alexiad*.⁴⁶ The most stylised form of this ideal-type might be said to be found with the Macedonian dynasty, with the Emperors Basil I, Leo VI, and especially Constantine Porphyrogenitus. However, since these emperors are associated politically with the imperial bureaucracy, rather than the military aristocracy, Anna could not have imported uncritically this Macedonian stereotype into the text of the *Alexiad*. Nor did Anna follow the more common presentation of her contemporary commentators, where the negative features of a ruler appeared to outweigh his positive qualities. Her own husband Nicephorus Bryennius had been strongly critical of the Emperor Nicephorus Botaniates's practice of granting superfluous titles and offices to the Constantinopolitan elite, while the Continuator of Scylitzes considered Nicephorus III to have been obtuse and sluggish. The early twelfth century writer, John Zonaras, adopted a highly critical attitude towards the prestigious emperors Basil II, Romanos I, and the earlier Roman emperors, Justinian and Constantine. More pertinently Zonaras clearly placed the origin of what he considered

46. These were Menander of Laodicea's categorisations: A.P. Kazhdan, 'The Social Views of Michael Attaleiates', in A.P. Kazhdan, S. Franklin, *Studies in Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge 1984) 25.

to be the tyranny of his own age with Alexius I Comnenus. Thus while several of Anna's contemporaries were highly critical of former emperors, there was also a tradition for praising a past ruler in order to make an oblique, or even an explicit critique of a contemporary emperor's policy. In the *Alexiad* Anna's critical passages are directed at those whom she considers to have been her father's enemies. The vehement and self-conscious defence of his actions would of course engage hostile criticisms of his reign. Yet a complex piece of writing like the *Alexiad* clearly lacks a singular meaning. Anna's history is an evasive text, which has many curious silences, as well as an imperious narrative. One can, however, conclude that this eulogy of the father of the Comnenian dynasty was in part intended to undermine the prestige and stature of his grandson, Manuel I Comnenus.

In composing the *Alexiad* Anna was politically ambitious. Her point of disagreement lay with the new Emperor's attitude to 'Franks, Celts and Latins'. While Alexius had used western knights as mercenaries, especially the South Italian Normans, he remained in Anna's history above them. Latins were barbarians, just like the Patzinaks or the Turks. The traditional focus of the Byzantine thought world was Constantinople and its imperial traditions. Under Manuel this perspective was changing. The Empire was ceasing to be so introspective. Latin traders, knights, and theologians were welcomed to Byzantium. Much closer links were pursued with regard to the crusader states and the maritime republics. Imperial circles realised that Byzantium could not be self-sufficient. It was impossible to return to Macedonian principles. The world had moved on. The challenge of Manuel's reign was how to utilise this western energy; how to interpret this changing world. Byzantium needed to respond positively to the Latin West and its crusading aspirations. 'Innovation' was for Manuel and his advisers the means to sustain Byzantine greatness.⁴⁷

47. For a succinct outline of the Emperor Manuel's 'renovatio imperii', see P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, 'The Emperor in the Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982) 169-177, and Paul Magdalino, 'The Phenomenon of Manuel I Komnenos', in *Byzantium and the West c. 850-c. 1200*, ed. J.D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam 1985) 171-199. For an earlier but sustained exposition of these profuse themes see P. Lamma, *Comneni e Staufer: Ricerche sui rapporti fra Bisanzio e l'Occidente nel Secolo XII*, 2 vols. (Rome 1955-7).

There were also dissenting groups, some fundamentalist, others anxious about the means and the rate of 'innovation'. It was to these circles that Anna had addressed the *Alexiad*.⁴⁸ There is little evidence, for all the elements of continuity and tradition with the Empire, to suggest that certain beliefs were shared by all, or even most members of Byzantine society. In twelfth century Byzantium stability evolved from the diversity of values and beliefs which proliferated between individuals and social groups. Even by its own standards Byzantium was exceptionally prosperous for most of Manuel's reign. A major economic revival was clearly well under way by the mid 1140s. Constantinople's diverse range of artisanal craftsmen generated commercial and manufacturing wealth. This economic upturn has also to be

48. It is difficult to clearly describe the warring Comneni factions, but the various clans would include the following figures: Irene, the wife of Andronicus, John Comnenus' second eldest son, who like Anna was under some form of household arrest between 1143-4, and 1148-9. In 1142 Irene for a few months had been the wife of the heir to the throne, but her husband died in Constantinople soon after returning by sea with his brother Isaac and the body of the first born, the co-emperor, Alexius. Irene was a patron of poetry, literature and philosophy. Some members of her circle of literati had mingled in the Empress Irene Ducas' circle; a forum that had also included Anna Comnena and Irene's son, Andronicus. These oppositional groupings, some of whom had opposed the Emperor John's accession, remained hostile to Manuel's assumption of Imperial power. Manuel's elder brother, Isaac, was the most volatile figure during the early years of his brother's reign, and he could count on significant support within the church, the imperial court and bureaucracy. The most dangerous conspirator of Manuel's reign, was Andronicus, son of the Emperor John's estranged brother, Isaac. John II's closest confidant was John Axouch, the grand domestic and it was his eldest son Alexius Axouch who had married the daughter of the Emperor John's first born, Alexius, and his Russian wife, Dobrodjeja. As has been already mentioned John Axouch appears to have been sympathetic towards Isaac's aspirations for the Imperial throne. His eldest son, Alexius Axouch, was subsequently disgraced in 1167 because of his opposition to the pro-Latin group at court, and his known sympathy towards Andronicus, especially for the latter's opposition to Manuel's plans for his only daughter Maria and the heir to the Hungarian throne, Bela, renamed Alexius in Byzantium. Cinnamus and Choniates give very different accounts of Alexius Axouch's disgrace. This familial strife initially originated with the sibling struggles of Alexius' and Irene Ducas' children. The infighting was persistently aggravated by the Empress, and Anna Comnena. The feuding was subsequently sustained by a second generation of contenders throughout the reigns of the Emperors John and Manuel. It finally culminated in Andronicus's butchery of Manuel's progeny, and their spouses. These murders were carried out in the wider context of a series of terrorist policies which included a brutal persecution of selected families from the military aristocracy and a putschist massacre of westerners.

associated with the activities of the merchants from the Italian city republics, principally Venice, who traded in most of the major cities of the Empire. They had extended their existing important trading communities in Constantinople. In the provinces, in the cities of Corinth, Halmyros, Thebes and Sparta significant commercial relations were established with the Byzantine and Jewish manufacturing communities. In part this prosperity also evolved as a consequence of the political stability given to Byzantium through the lengthy rule of the three Comnenian Emperors, Alexius, John and Manuel (1081-1180). This continuity can be contrasted to the traditionally favoured earlier Byzantine era, when from December 16th 944 to January 10th 976 there were seven changes of ruler, almost all of which were the direct result of secret or overt murder. As A.P. Kazhdan poignantly writes 'the tragedy of the Byzantine empire seems to lie in the fact that the trend towards feudalization, which was progressive in early medieval conditions, met insurmountable resistance from the bureaucracy, the autocratic regime, traditional law, and traditional social psychology'.⁴⁹ It is clear that Anna Comnena was part of that 'insurmountable resistance'. Twelfth century Byzantium was enmeshed in a superstructural crisis which was cultural, ideological and political. How were the Empire's peoples to respond to the challenge of the West? Anna Comnena's response to this impassioned debate is contained within the narrative of the *Alexiad*.

At the imperial court in the 1140s Manuel's supporters were able to argue that these so called 'changes' originated in the reign of the emperor's grandfather, Alexius. That was when the first Crusade appeared, to be followed by another in 1101, that was when the Normans first invaded Byzantium, that is when the emperor made trading treaties with Venice, Genoa and Pisa. The events of the late 1140s brought a second Crusade; once again

49. A.P. Kazhdan, 'Review Article: The Byzantine Empire', *Past and Present* 43 (1969) 165-7. For the wealth of twelfth-century Byzantium, see M.F. Hendy 'Byzantium 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (1970) 32-52; and *idem*, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300-1450* (Cambridge 1985) 587-9, 600-1.

large 'Latin, Celtic, Frankish and German' armies moved through Byzantium, the South Italian Normans attacked Byzantium, and the maritime republics had their privileges/rights renewed. These events recreated the controversies over what kind of response the emperor and his advisors should make. Manuel clearly followed the practices which Alexius had evolved in his own relations with the crusaders.⁵⁰

In the early discussions with the diplomatic embassies sent by the German Emperor Conrad and King Louis VII of France Manuel I Comnenus had insisted upon the crusaders taking an oath of non aggression towards Byzantine territory and cities. Christian friendship was stressed. Manuel referred to each western monarch as 'holy friend and brother'. The Byzantines promised to provide markets and provisions for the crusaders. These terms were agreed on by both sides through sworn oaths. Much more contentious was Manuel's request that if the crusaders drove the Turks from any area and city belonging to imperial domain, then that city or land should be restored to the Byzantines. This request caused some controversy in Louis' court and the matter was deferred until both sovereigns were able to meet in person. It was resolved in the final meeting between Manuel and Louis. Louis' barons swore an oath to respect Byzantine cities where market facilities were offered in Asia Minor; where there were no markets and the crusaders were resisted the city could be sacked but had to be left vacant by the crusaders. Like his grandfather Manuel was able to obtain an oath of fealty from the Frankish barons. He had also been in direct communication with Pope Eugenius thanking him for information concerning the Crusade, and assuring the Pope of his efforts to assist the passage of the crusaders through his empire. Manuel also expressed the wish directly to Pope Eugenius that the crusaders should hand over any conquests that were made on the former land of the Byzantine empire. These sentiments are clearly similar to the sympathetic

50. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, 60; Cinnamus, *Deeds of John and Manuel*, transl. C.M. Brand (New York 1976); Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. and transl. V.G. Berry (New York 1948); P. Lamma, 'I primi anni di Manuele 1143-8, 2: la Seconda Crociata', *Comneni e Staufer*, I (Rome 1955) 56-83.

views expressed by Alexius I Comnenus in a letter written to Oderisius, Abbot of Monte Casino, and sent from Constantinople in June 1098. The emperor reassured the abbot of his fatherly cooperation and aid to the army of the Franks. His empire would assist for a second time. Commenting upon the death of knights and foot soldiers Alexius asserted that they were 'blessed, indeed, since they met their end in good intent. Moreover, we ought not to regard them as dead, but living and transported to life everlasting and incorruptible'.⁵¹ Such sentiments indicate that Alexius was responsive to the issue of the spiritual martyrdom of the crusader/pilgrims. Anna Comnena was not prepared to make this kind of acknowledgement. Her narration of the events of the crusade merely peters out into her more substantive theme of the emperor's struggle with Bohemund. Book eleven ends with the Norman sailing in a bireme from the port of Antioch. He has chosen to live in a coffin accompanied by a putrefying cock. On the island of Corfu he re-emerges to threaten Alexius with a diabolical end: 'with many a murder I will make your cities and your provinces run with blood, until I set my lance in Byzantium itself'.⁵²

Manuel's activities were thus at odds with Anna's projection of Alexius' policies, since the latter was supposed to know nothing of the crusaders until the first poor armies of pilgrims appeared in Byzantine territory. Yet the logic of the events of the Second Crusade surely suggests what had happened in the First Crusade.

The passage of Louis' forces through Byzantine territory to Constantinople had been relatively easy. The Byzantines provided guides, while there were numerous embassies and frequent correspondence between the two courts. Obviously heated incidents did break out but these related to such issues as the rate of money transactions and the amount of fodder and food that was available after the ravages of the German crusaders. Despite the inevitable

51. Alexius's letter to the Abbot of Monte Casino: letter XI in Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, 152-3.

52. *Alexiad*, XI 366-368.

looting and plundering by the smaller bands and poorer pilgrims these matters were resolved amicably between the two rulers, for both realised that although these events were inevitable, they could be contained. In the main Byzantine cities were respected and the Byzantines provisioned the crusaders. A more worrying feature for the imperial administration was Louis' refusal to follow the suggested route from Adrianople to Saint George of Sestos where the French forces would have shipped by sea to Abydos in Asia Minor. The Byzantines were obviously wary of crusader armies that were encamped outside Constantinople. The recent experience with the German crusaders who had wrecked the Philopation park and part of Pera had strongly reinforced this. In the winter and spring of 1096-7 the emperor Alexius had also had to face the threat posed by the large crusader armies to his capital city. In the *Alexiad* Anna had presented the main threat as coming from the wily schemes of Bohemund. Yet the Norman had initially been cooperative. In 1146-7 the threat posed to Manuel and Byzantium by the resources and activities of king Roger II of Sicily was very real. The Byzantines surely knew about the activities of a pro-Sicilian group of barons and clergy in Louis' court. Sicilian emissaries had visited Louis' court at Etampes in February 1147 at the inception of the crusade with dire warnings of Greek treachery. Godfrey, bishop of Langres was especially vehement in his incitement of the crusaders to ally with the Sicilian Normans in an attempt to conquer Constantinople. It is also clear that Odo of Deuil, the royal chaplain and chronicler of Louis' expedition, retrospectively agreed with these sentiments. He states that the pro-Sicilian faction, and those who opposed Arnulf's argument were equally represented at Louis' court. In the summer of 1147 a Sicilian fleet seized the island of Corfu and then raided the gulf of Corinth sacking Thebes and Corinth, the empire's primary provincial silk making centres. Hundreds of skilled artisans were forcibly transported to Sicily. In these difficult circumstances Manuel made special efforts to entertain Louis. In Constantinople thirteen consecutive days of feasting, relaxing and site visits were organised. At the initial reception both sovereigns kissed and embraced symbolically. Odo of Deuil wrote that Manuel cherished the king with great affection: 'they left as brothers'. The role of

the papal legates at Constantinople is as difficult to unravel as is Adhemar of le Puy's visit to Constantinople. Louis, probably because of the division of opinion amongst his barons, remained ambiguous, even cool towards Manuel's effort to secure an alliance against king Roger II.

An important accompanying feature of the crusaders' passage through the empire was the response of the Greek Orthodox Church. At each of the major cities the pilgrims had been met by processions of orthodox clergy. Chanting and icons had been much to the fore, while there is considerable evidence to suggest common religious services occurred. In Constantinople this Christian fraternisation was intensified. On the feast of Saint Dennis Manuel sent a group of selected clergy to Louis' camp where they made a favourable impression, especially through their chanting and singing; the crusaders being strongly moved by the melodious singing of the *castrati*. The purposes of these rituals and processions was obviously to remind the crusaders of the communality of all Christians. Such an initiative would only have come about through mutual discussions between the Orthodox hierarchy and the Byzantine emperor. These ceremonies would have obviously been frowned on by Anna. She regarded Latins as heretics.

The relationship between the Byzantines and the German Emperor, Conrad III is more problematic. Rather surprisingly Nicetas Choniates muddles the chronology and the identity of the crusaders in a spectacularly confusing way. The sources of irritation between the two emperors appear to relate to the extensive German looting, and their rivalry over the connotations of their respective imperial titles. Cinnamus in his history emphasizes the commentaries and witticisms that Manuel included in his correspondence to Conrad. It is only after the defeat of the German troops at the hands of the Byzantines outside Constantinople, and more especially the disasters of the Philomelium route where the German crusaders are decimated by the Turks, that the two rulers enter into serious political talks. These largely focus on the issue of the Norman kingdom of Sicily and Southern Italy.

In general terms there is a remarkable similarity between Anna Comnena's portrayal of the First Crusade and the vocabulary Nicetas Choniates's uses to describe the second crusade: 'a cloud of enemies, a dreadful and death dealing pestilence fell upon the Roman borders. I speak of the campaign of the Germans joined by other minds of nations . . . the pretext for this expedition was provided by the Lord's empty tomb'.⁵³ However, Choniates' jaundiced perspective is understandable because he had lived through the humiliations of the collapse of the empire, and had personally witnessed the cruel and philistine sacking of Constantinople by western crusaders. This horrendous experience obviously encouraged his natural pessimism, for Choniates portrayed 'life' as a perpetual and inescapable trap. Unmitigated gloom and inescapable disaster is the lot of mankind. Fate is fickle, often cruelly so. Failure is the consequence, sooner or later of each mortal. Manuel's reign for all its brilliance is no exception. The Byzantine empire collapsed in ruins within twenty-four years of his death. Why should he escape the fog of hopelessness? The reasons for Anna's vindictive assessment of the Crusaders, and Latins in general are less easy to establish.

It is clear that in regard to western crusaders/pilgrims Manuel I Comnenus largely reiterated Alexius' policies in difficult circumstances. But Anna does not wish to demonstrate this continuity. The *Alexiad* is an idealised enshrinement of her father's reign. The crusader passages are constructed in such a way as to attempt to undermine the presence of Latins and Celts in Byzantine history. The overt hostility towards the Franks that exists throughout the *Alexiad* is an explicit negation of the keen and wide ranging interest Manuel took in the Latin West and Outremer. Anna's presentation of Alexius' refusal to have a dialogue with the unmentioned Pope Urban II is obviously set at odds with Manuel's correspondence with Pope Eugenius III. The obvious triumphs of Manuel's early years are implicitly criticised. Both Comnenian rulers recognised the commercial energies and military abilities of Westerners. The Papacy and its

53. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, 60-1.

crusader supporters saw the crusades as a meritorious movement. In his encyclical of December 1145 Pope Eugenius III has written that those who had answered the call to the First Crusade had been 'fired by the ardour of charity'. Saint Bernard after learning of the Muslim military victories over the Christians which precipitated the calling of the Second Crusade had written 'If we harden our hearts and pay little attention . . . where is our love for God, where is our love for our neighbour?'⁵⁴ Crusaders thought they were undertaking God's work. They were Christ's soldiers protected by the reassurance of martyrdom. There was also a widespread recognition of the military clan of western knights. The First Crusade, the crusade of 1101 and the Second Crusade are complicated movements. They were expressions of a renewed Latin spirituality. They also clearly had opportunist and elitist features. The cumulative impact of these events, and the sustained dynamism of the crusading movement had the profoundest effects on Byzantium. It is probably not an oversimplification to state that they permanently shattered the unity and autonomy of the empire. Anna Comnena undoubtedly perceived the importance of these crusading ventures; that is why she wrote out of her history her father's obvious involvement with the inception of the First Crusade.

In a more personalised sense Cinnamus enthused in the strongest possible terms over Manuel's charismatic leadership, dwelling strongly on his chivalric, masculine deeds of ardour, courage and sagacity. Throughout his long intellectual career Eustathius of Thessalonica portrayed Manuel as an ideal soldier, a warrior emperor who slept in his armour, a ruler who toiled with his soldiers, joining with them in the construction of fortifications, hewing and carrying stones. Manuel rarely rested. His diet was modest. He withstood the rigours of thirst and the cold. Nobody could equal his steadfast perseverance. Eustathius stressed that Manuel had built securely on the foundations laid by his grandfather; he brought security to the Empire. In every matter he turned to Manuel revealed that he was a virtuous and wise ruler.

54. J. Riley-Smith, 'Crusading As An Act of Love', *History* 65 (1980) 177-192.

Blessed with remarkable foresight, his judgements were always soundly based.⁵⁵ This kind of admiration is most obviously seen in the writings of the court orators. Anna will have none of this. Her father was a greater emperor. More especially in relation to the crusaders Alexius' policies were in Anna's characterisation startlingly distinct from those currently being carried out by Manuel. Her stance is oppositional. In part Anna has written the *Alexiad* in an effort to mobilize support for a conservative and traditionalist perspective. The fundamentalist dichotomy which she constructs between the two emperors is over their respective attitude towards the Latin West, which is mediated through the crusading experience.

In the *Alexiad* Anna has constructed a variation of the classical Macedonian tradition. This ideological framework is most convincing when Alexius I Comnenus is dealing with the Asiatic nomads, the Patzinaks and the Cumans, the heretical Bogomils, and the Turks. But Anna presents her father standing firm against, and dominating all barbarians, and this inevitably involves the Normans, the Celts and the Franks.⁵⁶ In the case of the perilous Norman invasions of the Empire by Robert Guiscard and his most effective son, Bohemund, the Macedonian presentation can still be influential. The controversial and incompatible material is concentrated in Anna Comnena's narrative of the First Crusade. The text of the *Alexiad* states that Alexius knew nothing of the crusade project until 'he heard the rumour that countless Frankish armies were approaching'. This was patently not so, for Alexius was a far more astute and responsive a ruler than Anna allows. Political and cultural eclecticism characterised the rule of all three

55. A.P. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington D.C. 1982), chapt. IV: 'Eustathius of Thessalonica: the Life and Opinions of a Twelfth-Century Byzantine Rhetor', 115-95; chapt. VII: 'Nicetas Choniates and Otherwise: Aspects of the Art of Literature', 256-86; Eustathius of Thessalonica's Funeral Oration of 1180 is in *MPG* 155, 973-1032.

56. For the commonality of all 'barbarians' in the *Alexiad* see J. Shepard, 'Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy Towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Byzantium and the West c.850-c.1200*, ed. J.D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam 1988) 97-117.

Comnenian emperors, and most dazzlingly so in Manuel's reign. The logic of Anna's attitude to 'Franks, Celts, Latins and Normans' was finally realised in the madness of Andronicus' rule. These murderous policies undoubtedly initiated the decisive decline of the Byzantine Empire, and prepared the way for the trauma of 1204.